



## SPRINGTIME CALLS

Springtime calls the angler back to Ontario's lakes, rivers and streams. The long winter lock-up is over. Ice and snow succumb to warming breezes, fish are moving to spawn and fishermen are breaking out their fishing tackle in readiness for a return to their favorite haunts.

Spring renewal is heralded by bubbling streams, by rivers thundering from nature's vanishing ice box, by schools of walleye and by leaping rainbow trout. Indeed, the day that trout season opens — the last Saturday in April — is when fishermen's springtime starts in earnest.

Each year, however, the first trout are preceded by smelt runs — schools of silvery fish that sweep close to sandy beaches, and up streams, as early as mid-April. Because smelt only run at night, they attract dedicated night-owl fishermen who, wearing waders and bearing nets, stand in the shallows from dusk until the early morning hours. They are acting out a cherished ritual that's invariably attended by a festive atmosphere. Whole families turn out to build bonfires on the beach, joining in the whoops of excitement when a net suddenly feels fish-heavy.

While fishing is enjoyed annually by three million Ontarians and some 700,000 anglers living outside the province, there's lots of room for everybody. Ontario has more than 250,000 lakes as well as hundreds of thousands of miles of rivers and streams. Such vastness allows for a huge diversity of fishing experiences.

Catching fish is, of course, only part of the fun. For many, spring angling is an elaborate excuse to step out into the freshly-washed outdoors, shake off the shivers and sniff a breeze laden with the promise of summer warmth. Nevertheless, the season is more rewarding than any other in terms of fishing excitement and tangible rewards. So it's little wonder that renewed anticipation of "the big one" always sets tongues wagging and the adrenalin pumping when springtime calls the angler...



Ontario

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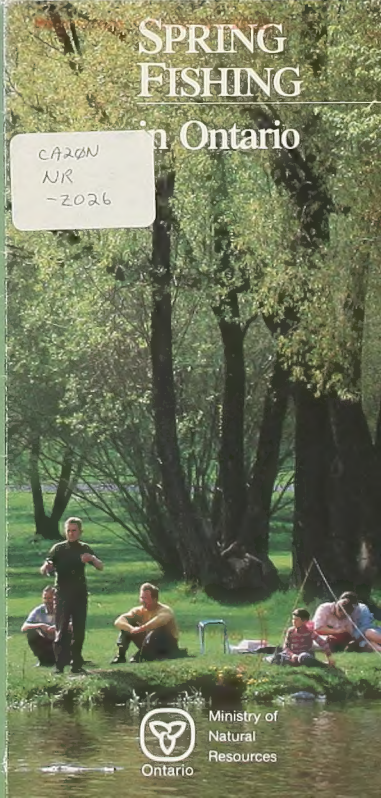
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## SPRING FISHING

in Ontario

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## WHAT'S BITING...

### Smelt

Easy to catch with dip or seine nets during the spring smelt runs, starting mid-April. Bring a large receptacle to hold fish. Size: 5-7 inches. Where to go: Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Simcoe and the major river mouths of Georgian Bay. Open season.

### Rainbow Trout

The spring favorite. A leaping, fighting fish more numerous than brook and brown trout. Average size: 3-12 lbs. Where to go: The southern shore of Georgian Bay, north shore of Lake Superior and Lake Ontario, from Toronto to Kingston. Season opens last Saturday of April. Record catch: 29 lbs. 2 ozs., mouth of the Nottawasaga River in Georgian Bay.

### Yellow Perch

Extremely tasty. More perch are caught in Ontario than any other fish. The spring runs last about three weeks, from mid-April to early May. Average size: 4-10 ozs. Where to go: Commonly found throughout the province. Some good places to try are Lake Simcoe, Lake Ontario (Bay of Quinte), Lake Erie (Long Point Bay), the North Channel of Manitoulin Island and Lake Nipissing (North Bay). Open season.



### Walleye

Ontario's premier game fish. Scrumptious eating. Named after its huge, light-sensitive eyes, this giant of the perch family bites best under poor light conditions. Average size: 1-3 lbs. Where to go: Lake Erie (Western Basin), Lake Ontario (Bay of Quinte), the French River, Lake Nipissing, Lake of the Woods and almost all the northern lakes. Season opens mid-May. Record catch: 22 lbs. 4 ozs., Niagara River, Fort Erie.

### Pike

Dubbed 'The Great Northern' by our friends south of the border, this fish is a scrapper with a long, slender body and a flattened mouth lined with razor-sharp teeth. Average size: 3-5 lbs. Where to go: Pike lakes can be found everywhere except the Kawarthas, Haliburton and Algonquin Park. Record Catch: 42 lbs. 2 ozs., Delaney Lake, near Kenora.

### Lake Trout

A denizen of deep, clear, cold water known as the 'monarch of the northern lakes'. Average size: 3-5 lbs. Where to go: inshore Lake Superior, Lake Simcoe, Lake Temagami, Algonquin Park and in lakes scattered from Sudbury, west to Kenora. Record catch: 63 lbs. 2 ozs., Lake Superior.

### Brook Trout

A beautifully speckled denizen of cold streams and spring-fed lakes. Average size: 8 ozs. - 1 lb. Where to go: major northern rivers, Hudson Bay estuaries, Nipigon River, Algonquin Park lakes and lakes and streams scattered across the north. World record catch: 14 lbs. 8 ozs., caught in 1914 in the Nipigon River, near Nipigon.

**Special note:** Fishermen's springtime marches north from the agricultural shores of Lake Erie to Hudson Bay's shoreline tundra. Accordingly, fishing seasons in the northerly reaches of the province tend to open slightly later than those in the south (check the Ontario fishing regulations summary for details).

**REPLENISHMENT** is all-important. Fishing seasons — most of which are open by the middle of May — were introduced to protect fish during their vulnerable spawning period. So the good fishing begins as soon as the rites of courtship are over. However, there are some small geographical exceptions to this rule. Most of Ontario's 250 fish sanctuaries are out of bounds to anglers throughout the springtime in order to protect the fish species at these locations. The various sanctuaries are listed in the Ontario fishing regulations summary.

The Ministry of Natural Resources boosts fishing prospects with a comprehensive program of fisheries management. This incorporates, for example, the building of fish ladders — one of the main reasons why rainbow trout are so widespread in Ontario. The province's 11 fishways, where trout and salmon can be seen leaping against the current, have become a major tourist attraction.

In the spring, MNR resumes its ongoing replenishment projects — the stocking of hatchery-raised fish in lakes, rivers and streams; the improvement of spawning beds; the creation of nursery areas, and the stabilization of riverbeds and banks.

Fishermen can help to maintain and conserve the Ontario fishery. While there are no restrictions on the size of spring fish hooked across 95 per cent of the province, there are limits on the number of fish that may be caught and kept each day as well as restrictions concerning the use of live bait (see the fishing regulations summary). Anglers are asked to put back carefully any fish they don't wish to keep.

## A CAUTIONARY REMINDER:

While the sun may be shining, the water is still very, very cold and hypothermia is the big danger to anyone unwary enough to fall in the water. High water levels and strong currents in snow-fed rivers and streams are other potential hazards. Also, since many of the smaller trout streams in Ontario are located on private land, anglers are reminded that a fishing licence does not give any fisherman the right to trespass on private property.

By mid-May — when the black fly and mosquito emerge — a liberal application of fly repellent is a necessity.

